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Knights of the rainbow

[Philadelphia]

1922

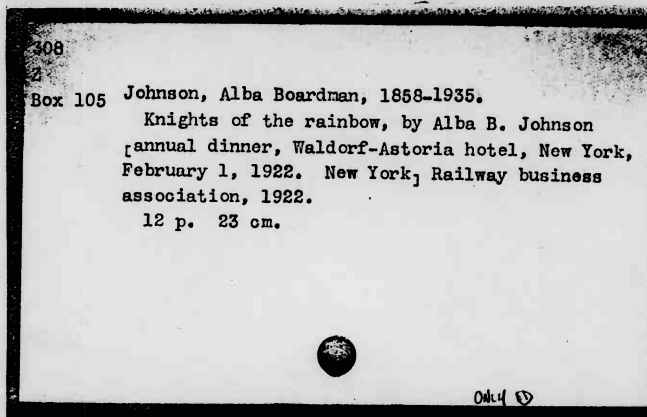
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KNIGHTS OF THE RAINBOW

BY

ALBA B. JOHNSON

RAILWAY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

1922

REQUESTS FOR COPIES
of this pamphlet will be welcome
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the hands of their representatives or
friends. Copies furnished or sent
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Frank W. Noxon, Secretary Railway
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Philadelphia.

Knights of the Rainbow

By ALBA B. JOHNSON

President, Railway Business Association

Annual Dinner, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, February 1, 1922

IT is said that half of humanity is shivering in the shadow of affliction while the other half is basking at the foot of a radiant rainbow. Mr. Meyer, Mr. Fish,* we greet you both as apostles of hope. As such you may feel at home here. This gathering is composed of those who provide the country with transportation. The hosts are the purveyors of railway necessities. Many of their guests are railway officers. Regarding the two groups as a consolidated phalanx they are the Knights of the Rainbow. If as we proceed it should appear that the Rainbow Order is one which the supply contingent pursues with special zest please understand that for most of us the rainbow yea these many moons has been our nearest approach to any kind of an order there was to chase.

The hope that springs beneath those snowy bosoms is something more than good, beautiful and true. It is unique. Transportation and cognate business form the only occupation in which there are no pessimists. Nobody but an optimist would go into it. If anybody else did, it would be like the Minnesota Society of New York. A stranger at their dinner looked about with astonish-

ment. He asked: "Are all the men in Minnesota six feet tall?" "Oh, no," replied his host. "It is a long, hard road from Minnesota. These are the survivors." Glance from table to table. You see nothing but optimists. The pessimists have perished.

FALSE OPTIMISTS

ONE of my colleagues lately described our members as concerns that sell things to railroads if the latter have anything left after paying wages. Whether anything is left depends partly on the wages and partly on the revenue. There are various types of false optimists. One is the man who advises railway employees to do the roads all the damage possible on the theory that they can make themselves more comfortable by sawing off the limb upon which they sit. Another false optimist is the man who thinks the Interstate Commerce Commission can give the roads adequate income if labor cost is regulated without regard to it. His blood relative imagines that gentlemen whose specialty, if any, is something else, but who have political position, can offer their judgment in place of the judgment of the Commission and leave that body still a fountain of justice, wisdom and responsibility. Still another false optimist is the man who advises shippers that rate reductions will increase freight movement when all other factors are wrong. His next

* Eugene Meyer, Jr., Managing Director of the War Finance Corporation and Frederick P. Fish, chairman of the National Industrial Conference Board, speakers at the Railway Business Association dinner.

of kin advises them that in time of slump you don't have to prepare facilities for the coming boom, because the Lord will provide.

MUSCULAR OPTIMISTS

THE late Canon Kingsley identified what he termed muscular Christians. The Knights of the Rainbow are muscular optimists. They have hope but they are doing something to make their hope come true. The supply battalion is organized for that purpose. In their associated capacity

they have honored me with the privilege of keeping them posted as to what is going on out yonder where the other half lives—the half of humanity which shivers in the shadow of affliction. In performance of that function it has seemed to me opportune to obtain first-hand data and report at this time on the impenetrability of the outer gloom. What is optimism? Why? What is pessimism? Why? How much is there of each and what is current thought regarding them?

The Pessimists

CLASSIFIED EXAMPLES

I HAVE constructed a directory of optimists and pessimists—
Born optimists and pessimists.
Self-made optimists and pessimists.
Optimists or pessimists made so by their pessimistic or optimistic wives respectively.

Golf pessimists. (There are of course no golf optimists).

To the men and women on that list I have addressed a letter. Some of you have seen it. One of the optimists printed it in his column. Many responses have come. I invite you to hear extracts. First here is my letter:

THE EPISTLE

"I SHALL soon have occasion to dispense such cheer and hope as I can among a disconsolate guild who stand on the industrial beach praying for the tide to turn. We have had many definitions of the optimist. Some of them convey sustaining philosophy. I would be fortified powerfully for my coming exertion if I could induce you to write me post-

haste (1) the best optimist and pessimist story you remember ever hearing; (2) the latest. Such responses and any words of comfort, whether epigrammatic or discursive, as you may append will be received with fervent gratitude."

If I were to read you the full text of all the replies it would consume the whole evening. If I were merely to cull out of each letter the meat or pulp, it would unduly encroach upon the time of our speakers. Let me therefore read you extracts only from a few which lend themselves to condensation, and for the rest take leave to print.

Contributions are still descending in a blizzard. They are classified. Hence my manuscript is based upon the loose leaf system.

William T. Hornaday

(Director, New York Zoo)

I AM unacquainted with any optimists. I have not heard any optimistic stories. All my friends have their umbrellas up in an effort to pre-

pare for the worst. I have just written an article entitled "Banditry as a Sign of National Decay." Perhaps you can find among our so-called great leaders a few who think prosperity stands at our door with a jimmy trying to break in. I should think also that Mrs. Horace E. Dodge under the inspiration of her \$825,000 dog collar of pearls could give you the kind of contribution you require.

Stuyvesant Fish

IN all candor I can see nothing but trouble ahead. Congress, instead of giving its individual attention to reducing appropriations, is going off more and more into added extravagance, like the soldiers' bonus largess, and into the discussion of taxation,

The Jokesmiths

John Haynes Holmes

(New York Clergyman)

A PESSIMIST in Kansas declared he expected that Kansas would have good roads about the time everybody else was travelling in aeroplanes.

George F. Parker

(Author, "Recollections of Grover Cleveland")

A PESSIMIST is a man who having the choice of two evils takes both.

Owen Wister

(Author)

THE pessimist is one who has to live with an optimist. (This definition is given by nearly half the contributors).

Daniel, upon finding himself in the

which is merely the symptom of the disease of which appropriations form the cause. Naturally enough State Legislatures and municipal bodies are following the example of Congress.

Henry S. Pritchett

(President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching)

YOUR pathetic appeal touches my heart. I am, however, anything but optimistic myself at the moment. I have had to carry two jobs instead of one all winter, and altogether my mind is in need of some optimistic reinforcement from outside.

(Gentlemen, what do you think of that? A million men with no jobs at all and Pritchett complains of having two. Is that optimism or pessimism?)

lion's den, observed, "At least, there will be no after-dinner speaking."

An optimist was falling from the top of the Woolworth Building. As he passed the 20th story, a man looked out and asked him how he was. He replied, "All right so far."

Common sense repudiates both optimism and pessimism.

G. A. O'Reilly

(Vice-President, Irving National Bank)

AN optimist is the man who waxes keen over the pleasure he experiences in taking his quinine raw.

Otis Skinner

(Actor)

A FARMER had an invalid wife who was constantly bemoaning her enfeebled condition. One morning

when a neighbor asked him about her he sighed and said: "Well, I dunno—I hope Marthy gets well soon, or something!"

Mark Sullivan

(Washington Correspondent)

AN optimist is one who still carries a corkscrew. (This same joke is contributed in various forms by others).

Louis Wiley

(Business Manager, New York Times)

AN optimist is a man who attends to your eyes. A pessimist is one who fixes your feet.

A negro about to be hanged when asked if he had any last words to say replied: "No, I reckon not—except I want to tell you—all this sure is going to be a lesson to me."

Hamilton Holt

(Editor)

OLD lady: "Awful weather, sir."
Old gentleman: "Awful weather is better than no weather."

Henry Holt

(Publisher)

"DIOGENES was looking for a man," says Life. "What luck?" asked the wayfarer. "Oh, pretty fair," replied Diogenes. "I still have my lantern."

A pessimist is a man who refused to hang up his Christmas stocking because he was afraid Santa Claus would run off with it.

An optimist is a person who is treed by a bear and enjoys the view.

There are a great many self-styled optimists who are unaware of the fact that they are merely ignorant or lucky.

One optimist went on a picnic with us and in the enthusiasm of the moment forgot past history and partook freely of a mayonnaise. He heard two hours of the choicest picnic jokes without a smile. Since that day, whenever I have been overearnestly solicited to change my faith and live the cheerful life I have said to the optimistic tempter: "Are you really sure that you are an optimist? Have you ever really and truly tested your optimism? Have you ever tried a mayonnaise on it?"

David R. Forgan

(President, National City Bank, Chicago)

THE village optimist met a friend who exclaimed: "You know how insanely jealous Dr. Smith is of his pretty wife. Well, he returned last night, found Tom Jones calling, killed Jones and Mrs. Smith and blew his own brains out." "Well," said the optimist, "it might have been worse." "Worse!" said his friend. "What could be worse than a double murder and a suicide?" "Why," said the optimist, "if Dr. Smith had returned night before last he'd have found me calling on his wife, and that would have been a darned sight worse."

Christopher Morley

(Conductor of the Bowling Green, New York Evening Post)

I HAVE put your appeal into my column today, so very likely you will hear from some of my clients. (I did).

You remember the Self-Made Merchant's remark: "Employ optimists to get your business, but pessimists to figure your accounts."

Our situation at the moment is just

the opposite of King Canute's—we are sitting watching the bare beach with all the periwinkle shells and the unsightly ribs of wreckage and empty shells of dead crabs, and uttering an anvil chorus in the hope of persuading the deep again to come up to the weedy foreshore.

Don C. Seitz

(Business Manager, New York World)

A QUAKER bought goods of a Jew, sold them to a Scotchman and made money. This shows that anything is possible. (This same joke in various forms is reported by numerous contributors).

William C. Redfield

(Former Secretary of Commerce)

A NEGRO soldier standing on the parapet in full sight of the enemy called for them to come on and have a real war. Promptly a mortar missile exploded over his head and covered him with mud and dirt. When the negro came to he said "They is one thing about dese Germans; they sutinly does give service."

C. B. W. Gray

(Exchange Editor, Life)

FROM PUNCH:

Optimist: Cheer up, old man. Things aren't as bad as they seem.

Pessimist: No, but they seem so. From Life, Dec. 8, 1921:

Optimist: I believe the time will come when there will be no more jokes about optimist and pessimist.

Pessimist: If it does, we shall not be there to enjoy the relief.

An optimist is a man who believes

he can think up any new definitions of an optimist and a pessimist.

Hamlin Garland

(Author)

THE optimist just now is the fellow who thinks things are just as bad as they can get. The pessimist is the fellow who hopes they can be worse.

James A. Emery

(Counsel, National Association of Manufacturers)

THE optimist is a man who sees a light that is not there, while the pessimist is the damn fool who is trying to blow it out.

The modern pessimist is a man who draws no consolation from a well-stocked wine-cellar because he has an invincible belief that the corks are leaking. An optimist is one who, possessing nothing but a corkscrew, can reconstruct in contemplation of it a cellar that would strain the imagination of a George Saintsbury. Pessimists are usually railroad stockholders. Optimists are gentlemen who were forced to take stock in the Ford enterprises in return for personal services which that original inventor was unable to pay for. Pessimists believe that the Detroit jitney owner wants to reduce Muscles Shoals to a Ford. Optimists believe he will hitch it to a star and run the world on two cylinders.

Yesterday the man next me bought a bottle of hair restorer from the baldest barber I have ever seen, and the New York Times records in its labor notes the monthly meeting of the Bar Tenders' Union in Jersey City. "If these things are done in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?"

Anonymous and Classical

CALORIES

'TWIXT the optimist and the pessimist

The difference is droll:
The optimist sees the doughnut
While the pessimist sees the hole.

LORD BACON

PROSPERITY is the blessing of the old Testament, adversity is the blessing of the New . . . yet in the old Testament, if you listen to David's harp you shall hear as many hear-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath labored more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon.

The Female of the Species

Mrs. Winifred Sackville Stoner
(Known as the Wonder Mother of a Wonder Daughter and a Wonder Son-in-law)

ACTIVE optimism makes peppimism. A peppimist is one who if he goes to the front door and cannot get in tries the back door. If that fails—the window or the chimney—but he gets there. A pessimist becomes a peppimist by lengthening the s's into peace and plenty.

Ida M. Tarbell

(Author, who was told it by Mark Sullivan)

I HAVE just been to my doctor. You know I have been worried about my heart. I am much encouraged. He says it will last as long as I live.

DR. ABBOTT'S CORRESPONDENT

AN unknown friend asked Dr. Lyman Abbott: "It there any harm in suicide?"

SAFETY FIRST

PESSIMIST—one who wears both belt and suspenders.

MAIN STRENGTH

NOT the man who always smiles is the optimist, but the man who can always turn frowns and tears into smiles.

OUR PURSUITS

THE optimist is a person who pursues joy; the pessimist one who pursues truth.

Elsie M. Hill

(Chairman National Council,
National Woman's Party)

ONE encouraging fact amid the present day disturbances is that Alice Paul is applying her clear and powerful mind to the study of law, and that while mastering its technic, she is maintaining her clear, simple, constructive power, which like all simple and powerful things, is a mystery.

Amelita Galli-Curci

(Prima Donna)

I SUGGEST that you write to Irvin Cobb, who can probably supply you with a dozen good ones off-hand. (There is your perfect optimist. How can Cobb disappoint a faith like

that? But listen further to this voice:)

I am an optimist, however, and I think everyone else ought to be. We are certainly well off here in the U. S. A. Anyone who thinks we are not should be sent to Europe to live.

Maud Ballington Booth

(In charge of prison work, Volunteers of America)

TWO men looked out from prison bars.

One saw mud—the other saw stars.
A mother sent her two little girls to play in a beautiful garden. Soon one child ran back, crying. "Oh! Mother, Mother," she moaned, "all the roses have thorns." By and by the other child came dancing in radiant. "Oh Mother, Mother!" she cried, "all the thorns have beautiful roses."

Elsie Janis

(Gangster)

WELL! boys, la guerre est fini, And, of course, we are glad; But as time goes on we'll realize That the war was not so bad. Of course it had its drawbacks, But it had its glories too; And, for me, my greatest glory was That I got to know you.

To know you in your hardships;
To know you in your joys;
To know that my life's finest hours Were spent among you boys.
In dugouts or in Y huts,
In boxing ring and trench
I loved to see you smile at me
And yell in doughboy French:
Bon jour—comment to hell est vous,
And sing my songs with me.
Oh boys, I know it's selfish,
But I'm sorry it's "fini."

The Gentleman Optimists

Frederick P. Fish

(Chairman National Industrial Conference Board)

MY definition of an optimist—and I mean the ordinary barnyard optimist—is that he is a man who shuts his eyes to things that are wrong and does not think it worth while to bother to take them up and see if they can be corrected. My definition of a pessimist is a man that has not got the common sense to hope and believe that if he and others like him put their shoulders to the wheel things are going to be accomplished for the betterment of the human race.

(This is from Mr. Fish's Railway

Business Association speech, which is published separately).

Julius Rosenwald

(President, Sears-Roebuck & Co.)

A newsboy thinly clad and drenched to the skin by the soaking rain stood shivering in the doorway on a cold day in November. First one bare foot and then the other was lifted from the pavement for a moment and placed against his leg to get a little warmth. Every few minutes his shrill cry could be heard as he shouted: "Morning papers! Morning papers!"

A gentleman, well protected by oil-

skin and umbrella, in passing stopped to buy a paper, and, noticing the boy's plight, said:

"This kind of weather is pretty hard on you, my lad."

Looking up with a cheery smile, the boy replied:

"I don't mind this much, Mister. The sun will shine again."

George Haven Putnam

(Publisher)

LAST night I had the pleasure of hearing Lord Lee, one of the English Commissioners to the Washington Conference, give a clear-headed and decidedly optimistic statement as to what the Conference had accomplished. It is very satisfactory, bearing in mind that the previous attempts for world-wide acceptance have been blocked by petty partisanship and personal antagonism, that America should now be taking a more dignified and effective course.

William J. Burns

(Director, Bureau of Investigation,
Department of Justice)

CRIME, which in the past has been rampant, has reached its apex and is decreasing. Out of the turmoil incident to a world conflict will come a civilization blessed with peace and prosperity in which the brotherhood of man will become the dominant note.

George B. Cortelyou

(President, Consolidated Gas Co., New York)

WILLIAM McKINLEY said: "A patriot makes a better citizen than a pessimist."

Emerson says: "Every great and commanding movement in the annals

of the world is the triumph of some enthusiasm."

John Moody

(Investment Adviser)

I HAD a most excellent and humorous story in mind; but upon reading your last sentence calling for words of comfort, I began to study the question just when the big locomotive orders would come in, and in the tangle of puzzles and snarl of thoughts that ensued, the story got lost.

It is unlikely that railroad traffic will recover at the rate of more than 7 or 8% per annum. This has been our experience in previous normal business depressions. The conspicuous difference between the present depression and what might be called a normal depression is the world-wide war impoverishment which cuts down per capita consumption, and thereby renders the growth of railroad traffic slow. Assurance, however, that recovery will gradually take place lies in the world-wide decrease in unemployment; the improvement from two years ago in the standards of living in continental Europe; the decrease in the paper money inflation of European countries; the world-wide price deflation; the abundance of capital. Our present impression is that traffic should improve enough during this present year to pretty fully utilize the locomotives now on hand, and that during 1923, if not sooner, orders should come in in much larger volume.

William C. Redfield

(Former Secretary of Commerce)

AS basic a fact as any is that we have stood the gaff, and such a gaff, for so long and still are here

ready for business. In this State and in New England and others one person out of every three, all of us included, has saved \$600 in the savings bank and this has on the whole increased steadily throughout the year. Nor is it wholly a bad sign that the public refuses to buy until it is suited with prices or that on the other hand labor insists upon a larger share than it used to have. Both go to excess, but both, if reasonable, are movements in a sound direction. The process of liquidation has been a painful one, but it is well on towards its end. What has really happened has been that we have simply saved rather less money than usual as a nation during the bad year of 1921.

Charles G. Dawes

(General Manager of the United States)

THE reason I feel optimistic as to the future is because of my faith in that inexorable law of reaction in human nature. Because reaction is a matter of instinct rather than of intellect, and because the majority of the community is affected, things are sure to get better utterly irrespective of any reasons which may appeal to one why they should not. The reaction to confidence and hope after a season of long-continued depression and lack of faith is as inevitable as the inrolling of the tide. If it is any help to you to have my real reason for believing that things will be better, it is because they have been so bad.

Eugene Meyer, Jr.

(Managing Director, War Finance Corporation)

GROSS volume of business is in a way to undergo substantial increases during the present year, and

in that fact lies a fundamental basis for hopefulness in the railroad situation and in those businesses which depend upon the condition of the railroad industry as a whole.

Railroad credit is improving with the general improvement in credit conditions. There is a large demand for good railroad securities at improving prices. Equipment orders are being placed in considerable volume, and I confidently look for a continuation of the improvement.

(This is from Mr. Meyer's Railway Business Association speech, which is published separately).

Russell H. Conwell

(Author of "Acres of Diamonds")

ALMOST every valuable patent was the outcome of enforced leisure. The inventors had time and need to think. Even war has its beneficial results in international conferences and in the elimination of long existing evils. Out of 4000 of America's millionaires over 3700 were once (and sometimes twice) reduced to dire poverty. In want they laid the foundation of their success. That is the best time to begin. The reduction of the family income teaches finance, economy, chemistry of digestion, commerce of clothing and food, social relations, how to invest a dollar to the best advantage; and mutual privations make happy homes.

Joseph H. Beek

(Executive Secretary, National Industrial Traffic League)

DURING the past 20 years as I recall the figures, we have actually lost 2500 miles of railway that previously existed. The purchase of new equipment has not kept pace with the

demands of normal business. Nearly 15% of the equipment is classed as "bad order;" but as only those cars whose running gear is defective are reported to the Interstate Commerce Commission as "bad order," if cars requiring other repairs to make them properly serviceable and highly efficient were included, it is not improbable that the "bad order" figures would be from 20 to 25%.

The country has actually less transportation than it had five years ago.

War necessities resulted in an enormous expansion in the most important of our manufacturing plants. Industrially, therefore, our country is equipped to produce a larger volume of tonnage than ever before. If a revival of business should come over night, the railroads would be powerless to handle even a normal business, to say nothing of a largely increased business, which we think will come sooner or later.

I am an optimist on the United States. I believe the country will continue to grow and its industries to expand; that within the next few years we will have the largest business and the greatest prosperity that any of us

have ever witnessed. My anxiety, however, is that when that time comes, the railroads will be unable to meet the demands upon them.

For these reasons, I am of the opinion that we ought to be more concerned about the transportation machine and the quality of its product than we are about the charges for that service. The revenue of the carriers must be protected. They must be permitted to earn enough to enable them to finance themselves and to obtain the vast sums of money which they will require within the next five years, to provide facilities that will be equal to the demand of normal prosperity.

The estimates of the amount of money required to do this range from five to eight billions. It does not seem to me that the larger figure is an extravagant estimate. If the railroads were assured of that amount of money upon reasonable terms and were free to proceed with their plans for improving their properties, the stimulating effect of their entrance into the market as large buyers of the numerous commodities they require would immediately start the wheels of industry and the effect would be felt everywhere.

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